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PROPOSED ANNEXATION OF HAWAII.

SPEECH

OF

HON. WILLIAM S. MESICK,
OF MICHIGAN,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Monday, June 13, 1898.

WASHINGTON.

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Monday, June 13, 1898.

On the joint resolution (H. Res. 259) to provide for annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States.

Mr. MESICK said:

Mr. SPEAKER: Never has this country witnessed such a rapid and sweeping revolution of sentiment as has manifested itself in Congress and in all parts of this country since the outbreak of the war with Spain.

I admit that I was conservative on the question of annexing Hawaii prior to the declaration of war, but, through the force of unexpected events, I am to-day a staunch advocate of the proposition to annex these islands.

From the day that the Spanish fleet was destroyed and went down before the guns of the American squadron at Manila, which squadron was commanded by that splendid and heroic officer Commodore Dewey, a new purpose took hold of the people of the United States. We were brought suddenly to a realization of our power on the seas as well as upon the land, and it now becomes our manifest duty to possess the Hawaiian Islands.

Public attention has been called to a question of public necessity, and it is the judgment of the best minds and statesmen of to-day that now is the accepted time to take what has been offered to us.

There are many good and sufficient reasons why the Hawaiian Islands should be in the possession of the United States, but the principal one is because of their strategic importance.

Hawaii is the only spot in the Pacific, from the equator on the south to Alaska on the north and between America on the east and Asia on the west where water, food, or coal can be obtained.

It is also on or near the principal trade routes across the Pacific. Its unique position is what has given it the names of "the crossroads of the Pacific," "the key of the Pacific," and "the Gibraltar of the Pacific." Hence we readily see the strategic importance in case of war with any stronger naval power.

In the possession of an enemy, they would serve as a secure base for attacking any and all of our Pacific coast cities. In our possession, they would shut out and bar the enemy's fleet of all opportunities for coaling, food, supplies, repairs, or harbor protection.

Shall we leave these islands for some other country? The Ameri-

can people answer no. I know that I speak the sentiments of my constituency in the Eleventh Congressional district of the State of Michigan when I say that the time has now come when we should no longer hesitate on this question, and that they are willing to accept their share of the responsibility attending the annexation of the islands and the control of them in the future, notwithstanding the opposition of the Democratic constitutional lawyers who occupy seats in the House of Representatives.

The opponents to the proposed annexation of Hawaii tell us "it is the entering wedge for the annexation of the Philippine Islands, the Canaries, Porto Rico, Cuba; conquest, sea power, complications and alliances with European nations, a billion-dollar navy, a large and costly standing army, new war debts, the undermining of the Monroe doctrine, the interruption of industries and commerce, and a setback to the forward march of civilization."

I do not commit myself to any such policy when I give my vote in favor of the pending resolution.

The value of the Hawaiian Islands to this country for military and naval purposes, it seems to me, is beyond a question of doubt and can not satisfactorily be denied.

I quote from a letter written by General Schofield, of the United States Army:

Letter from J. M. Schofield, of St. Augustine, Fla., to Hon. John T. Morgan, relative to annexation of the Hawaiian Islands.

Our national interests should be secured by the exclusive right to occupy, improve, and fortify Pearl River Harbor so as to insure our possession of that harbor in time of war.

To illustrate my views on this subject, I have likened that harbor to a commanding position in front of a defensive line which an army in the field is compelled to occupy. The army must occupy that advanced position and hold it at whatever cost, or else the enemy will occupy it with his artillery, and thus dominate the main line. If we do not occupy and fortify Pearl River Harbor, our enemy will occupy it as a base from which to conduct operations against our Pacific coast and the isthmian canal, which must of course in due time be constructed and controlled by this country. The possession of such a base at a convenient distance from our Pacific coast would be a great temptation to an unfriendly nation to undertake hostile operations against us.

One of the greatest advantages of Pearl River Harbor to us consists in the fact that no navy would be required to defend it. It is a deep, landlocked arm of the sea, easily defended by fortifications placed near its mouth, with its anchorage beyond the reach of guns from the ocean. Cruisers or other war ships which might be overpowered at sea, as well as merchant vessels, would find there behind the land defenses absolute security against a naval attack. A moderate garrison of regular troops, with the militia on the island, would give sufficient protection against any landing parties from a hostile fleet. Of course an army on transports, supported by a powerful fleet, could land and capture the place, but that would be an expensive operation, one much less likely to be undertaken than the occupation of an undefended harbor, as a necessary preliminary to an attack on our coast or upon our commerce.

The value of such a place of refuge and of supplies for our merchant marine and our cruisers in time of war can hardly be overestimated, yet the greatest value to us of that wonderful harbor consists in the fact that its possession and adequate defense by us prevents the possibility of an enemy using it against us.

So far as I know, the leading statesmen, no less than the military and naval authorities of this country, have always been in accord on this subject. While it has not been proposed to interfere with the continued occupation by foreign nations of their military strongholds in this hemisphere, it has been publicly and emphatically declared that none of those strongholds shall ever be allowed to pass into the possession of any other nation whose interests might be antagonistic to ours. Now for the first time the occasion has arisen for carrying into effect our long-declared national policy.

A little State like Hawaii can not stand alone among the great nations, all of whom covet her incomparable harbor. She must have the protection of this country or some other great nation. But a protectorate without sovereignty is the last thing this country could afford to assume. In the absence of authority to regulate and control the intercourse between the

islands and other countries controversies must arise which would lead to war or to the loss of our invaluable military possession in the islands. No halfway measures will suffice. We must accept the islands and hold and govern them or else let some other great nation do it. To fail now to carry into effect our own great national policy upon the first occasion offered to us would, in my judgment, be one of those blunders which are worse than crimes.

To my mind what may be regarded perhaps as the sentimental aspect of the question is entitled to consideration. A colony of intelligent, virtuous, and patriotic Americans have rescued a country from barbarism and raised it to a high state of civilization and prosperity, until in the natural course of events the government of that country has fallen entirely into their hands. They now ask the privilege of adding that country to their own native land; of returning with their new possessions to the parental fold. Can they be turned away to seek a home among strangers? Not without violating one of the most sacred laws of nature and incurring the penalty which must, sooner or later, necessarily follow.

I am, dear Senator, with great respect, sincerely, yours,

J. M. SCHOFIELD.

Hon. JOHN T. MORGAN,
United States Senate, Washington, D. C.

It is not possible to tell where a war will take the victor. For the defeated and vanquished there is disappointment, loss, and long, dreary years of poverty and bankruptcy. But with the successful it is different. With success come new conditions and new issues and more extensive opportunities.

The people of the United States did not enter upon war for conquest. They did not have the remotest idea of such a thing. It was in the interest of humanity and not for conquest, but as a natural consequence we will be confronted with important questions pertaining to the disposition of the fruits of war.

Success will be ours, and we will come into possession of Porto Rico, the Philippines, and probably other colonial possessions of the enemy. And when that time does come, I have faith in the wisdom, patriotism, and statesmanship of our people to arrive at a proper solution of the question. You may always trust the American people to meet every emergency, and this one will be met promptly, fairly, and justly.

I represent a district in the middle of the State of Michigan, which has no fear of cannon shot from a man-of-war. Yet the people of my district are fully as much interested in building up the American Navy as their more exposed neighbors along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts.

Never in our history has the American Navy been nearer to the hearts of the American people than at this day.

John Adams once said that "naval power is the natural defense of the United States."

Our Navy has been neglected, and when it became necessary to call it into action we presented a sad spectacle racing all over the world for any kind of ships to press into the service.

The Republican party, in its national platform adopted at St. Louis in 1896, pledged itself to the building up of the American merchant marine in these words:

We favor the early American policy of discriminating duties for the up-building of our merchant marine and the protection of our ships in the foreign carrying trade, so that American ships, the product of American labor employed in American shipyards, sailing under the Stars and Stripes, and manned, officered, and owned by Americans, may regain the carrying of our foreign commerce.

We need a navy to protect our seacoasts, to protect the rights of American citizens in every port and harbor, and to protect our commerce along our coasts and with foreign countries.

During the past year our foreign commerce reached the sum of

\$2,000,000,000. It is impossible to build up a commerce on the high seas and retain it without a navy to protect it. The Navy is its natural ally.

At the present time the condition of our merchant marine is deplorable. In 1825 Webster said: "We have a commerce which leaves no seas unexplored, and navies which take no law from superior force." At that time 93 per cent of the foreign carrying trade of this country was borne in American ships; in 1830, 90 per cent; in 1835, 85 per cent; in 1840, 83 per cent; in 1845, 81 per cent; in 1850, 72 per cent; in 1855, 75 per cent; in 1860, before the war, 66 per cent; in 1865, only 28 per cent, a loss of 38 per cent in those five years.

These facts testify to the truth expressed by Sir Charles Wilson, an English authority, when he stated: "If there is one point clearer than another in the history of commerce, it is this, that when a State can not effectually protect its carrying trade in time of war, that trade passes from it and does not return."

In 1870 our ships handled 35 per cent of the carrying trade; in 1875, 26 per cent; in 1880, 18 per cent; in 1885, 17½ per cent; in 1890, 13 per cent; in 1895, nearly 12 per cent, and in 1897 we reached the lowest figure, of about 11½ per cent.

Closely identified with holding up our Navy and merchant marine is the importance of annexation of Hawaii and the building of the Nicaragua Canal.

As to the departure from the policy of our forefathers, of which the opposition have so much to say and so often quote, I have to say this: Americans revere the names of Washington, Madison, Jefferson, and Monroe. They were wise men in their day and generation; patriots who shaped and established the fundamental principles of our great institutions. They builded well, and the free people enjoy the blessings that have grown from the seed they sowed, have placed their names in the American temple of fame, and have surrounded them with imperishable garlands of patriotic remembrance. But they have passed from the scene of action; their good works live after them, but much of their wisdom, diplomacy, and national policy is not for these days, when we are engaged in a war with Spain, and should be revised and readjusted.

The war with Spain will develop a new policy and overturn many ancient ideas of national policy and bring the people of the United States into a broader view of their own national affairs as they bear upon the progress of the world.

The "traditions of our fathers" do not fit into the whirl of modern events or adjust themselves to the world's modern progress any more than the flintlock muskets of our Revolutionary fathers would now prevail against the Mauser rifles of the Spanish army, or the battle ships of 1812 against the modern battle ships of today which are engaged in the Spanish-American naval war.

The people of this country, under the guidance of Divine Providence, are making history. They are prosecuting a war that shakes the world from center to circumference and is fraught with stupendous possibilities. This is a righteous war. It involves the disenthralment of millions of our fellow-beings from oppression, the overthrow of the haughty dynasty, and the raising of this great Republic to a position of power among the nations of the world. That position once gained, as gained it will be, must be maintained. The American nation is powerful enough to maintain itself wherever it plants its flag.

That flag is an emblem of what we are and of what we hope to be, and when it is planted over the Hawaiian Islands, as it will be in the near future, it will mean universal education, light for every mind, knowledge for every child. It will mean that every citizen of those islands, native or otherwise, must be protected at home, in every State abroad, in every land, on every sea, and in

every port and harbor. It will mean that all distinctions based on birth or blood have perished from our laws, that our Government shall stand between labor and capital, between the weak and the strong, between want and wealth, and give and guarantee simple justice to all. We are bound to gain a great victory for our rights; let us hasten that victory by the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands.

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